

world for the necessities of our condition, do hereby resolve and declare that our political connection with the Mexican nation has forever ended and that the people of Texas do now constitute a free, sovereign, and independent republic and are fully invested with all the rights and attributes which properly belong to independent nations; and, conscious of the rectitude of our intentions, we fearlessly and confidently commit the issue to the decision of the Supreme arbiter of the destinies of nations.

Happy birthday to my home, the Republic of Texas.

WELCOMING PRIME MINISTER BINYAMIN NETANYAHU

(Mr. PALAZZO asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. PALAZZO. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to welcome our friend and ally Israeli Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu to the United States of America.

Tomorrow, the Prime Minister will address this Chamber as a head of state. Some are protesting and will not attend. This is shortsighted and, frankly, disheartening. We have no greater ally in the Middle East than Israel, and Israel's very existence is being threatened by its neighbors in the region.

Words like "total destruction" are being thrown around by its enemies. Iran marches towards a nuclear bomb; yet we do nothing, we say nothing. Sure, we negotiate, but we don't lead.

Mr. Speaker, the President needs to step forward and lead, tell the world that we will do what it takes to protect our Israeli friends, as we have done for over 70 years.

Prime Minister Netanyahu, welcome to the United States. I look forward to your remarks tomorrow and to our nations' continued friendship, as do the majority of Americans.

WELCOMING PRIME MINISTER BINYAMIN NETANYAHU

(Mr. GOHMERT asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. GOHMERT. Mr. Speaker, following my friend from Mississippi, it is important that we recognize that it is not just a person coming tomorrow to speak to us, it is the leader of Israel, our best friend in the Middle East.

You think I like to come here and get lectured about the Citizens United case by a guy that doesn't understand that case? You think I enjoy coming over here and being told, You pass my American Jobs Act right now, when he didn't even have one for a couple of weeks?

Of course not—I come and listen to the President because of the respect for the position. This is a dangerous precedent some are thinking about starting tomorrow: Well, I am just not going to show up because I don't like the man that is leading Israel.

They are our ally, and if you want people to stop showing up for others

like the President, then start that tradition.

It is a wrong move. Let's pay respect to our best friend's leader in the Middle East.

GOD BLESS TEXAS

(Mr. BARTON asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. BARTON. Mr. Speaker, 179 years ago, in a hamlet in what is now Grimes County, Texas, called Washington-on-the-Brazos, a handful of brave Texans voted to declare independence from Mexico. We call this day Texas Independence Day.

As those brave men were declaring their independence at a decrepit old mission in San Antonio, Texas, less than 200 patriots—led by people like Davy Crockett and William Barret Travis and James Bowie—were fending off an army of somewhere between 3,000 and 5,000 Mexican soldiers under the leadership of a General Santa Ana.

The Alamo fell on March 6, but on April 21, 1836, General Sam Houston, at a bayou called San Jacinto, led about 350 Texans in a surprise attack on the Mexican Army and won independence for Texas from Mexico.

God bless Texas, and God bless all those patriots 179 years ago for what they did.

BRIDGING THE DIVIDE: OBSERVATIONS ON RACE AND JUSTICE IN AMERICA

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. CARTER of Georgia). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 2015, the gentlewoman from Illinois (Ms. KELLY) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Ms. KELLY of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, this evening, the Congressional Black Caucus will take a moment to discuss our strong support for the confirmation of U.S. Attorney Loretta Lynch as the next Attorney General of the United States, and we will examine the larger issue of justice in America.

Tonight's CBC hour is entitled "Bridging the Divide: Observations on Race and Justice in America." As we reflect on the 50th anniversary of the Selma marches, the events of Bloody Sunday, and the progress that has been achieved in the years since, we must remember that the Voting Rights Act was achieved not only because of those who marched, it succeeded because of those who cared enough to get involved, a Congress that became engaged, and an active Department of Justice that was diligent about enforcing the Voting Rights Act.

Loretta Lynch is exactly the type of active, educated, and principled character we need as our next Attorney General. Last week, the Senate Judiciary Committee voted to confirm her as the next AG, paving the way for her

confirmation by the full Senate. This confirmation must come soon and cannot be held up for partisan political purposes.

With experience as a frontline prosecutor, a U.S. attorney, and as someone with a strong record of service over several decades, Ms. Lynch is more than qualified to sit at the helm of the Department of Justice and protect the rights of our American democracy.

On the issue of justice, there is so much more we can discuss tonight, but right now, it is most appropriate for us to examine a few topics that so many citizens in the districts we represent want to look at.

In addition to Ms. Lynch and the Department of Justice, we would like to take time to explore the value of black lives in America and the fact that they do really matter, perceptions in minority communities regarding police treatment, the impact of black incarceration on communities, and voting rights and disenfranchisement.

I want to thank the distinguished gentleman from the Garden State, my good friend and anchor for this hour of action, Representative DONALD PAYNE. Congressman PAYNE has been a forceful advocate for justice issues in America and a leader in the true sense of the word.

I yield to Congressman PAYNE.

Mr. PAYNE. Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the gentlelady from Illinois who has demonstrated her leadership throughout her time here in Congress, and I am just delighted to also be working with her.

Mr. Speaker, we want to thank the Congresswoman, once again, for opening tonight's Congressional Black Caucus Special Order hour. It is an honor to join with her and the other members of this caucus to speak directly to the American people and keep them up to date on our efforts.

□ 1915

We are here tonight to talk about the urgent need to ensure the nomination of Loretta Lynch as the next Attorney General of the United States of America.

Ms. Lynch has a distinguished legal career in private and public service, earning the respect of her colleagues and establishing herself as a topnotch lawyer and Federal prosecutor in the Eastern District of New York.

She has successfully prosecuted cases on far-ranging issues, including public corruption, violent crime, and terrorism. They have included a number of high-profile cases, such as *United States v. Volpe*. In that case, Ms. Lynch was part of the trial team that convicted several New York police officers involved in the torture of Haitian immigrant Abner Louima in 1997. She also prosecuted the Bangladeshi man convicted of attempting to blow up the Federal Reserve Bank of New York in 2012.

Mr. Speaker, Ms. Lynch's professional credentials are matched by her

strength of character. Throughout her career, Ms. Lynch has demonstrated unparalleled strength of character, integrity, and independence. She has displayed an unwavering commitment to the rule of law, to public service, and to this Nation. She has proven time and time again that she is a highly capable, independent leader who carefully considers all sides of an issue and does not cave to outside influences.

These are the characteristics we look for, characteristics we should and do demand when considering nominees for U.S. Attorney General.

Ms. Lynch's professional background and outstanding character suggest she would be capable of using her position to address a number of issues that are important to achieving true equality and justice for African American communities. These include perceptions of police treatment, voting rights, and sentencing disparities, which undermine the foundations of African American communities.

There is every indication that Ms. Lynch would make an outstanding U.S. Attorney General, and it is the hope of this caucus that she can quickly be confirmed by the Senate.

GENERAL LEAVE

Ms. KELLY of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on the subject of my Special Order.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Illinois?

There was no objection.

Ms. KELLY of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, it is my honor to yield to the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. BUTTERFIELD), the chair of the Congressional Black Caucus.

Mr. BUTTERFIELD. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank Ms. KELLY for her leadership and for yielding me this time as a representative of the 46 men and women comprising the Congressional Black Caucus.

Mr. PAYNE, I want to thank you for all you do for our caucus and what you mean to not only the State of New Jersey, but also what you mean to all of us.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased that we have set aside this hour to remark about the confirmation process for Loretta Lynch. President Obama should be commended for choosing an Attorney General nominee who is well qualified in every respect. Though she lives in New York City, she is a native of Greensboro and Durham, North Carolina. She is a North Carolinian for sure.

Her father, the Reverend Leonzo Lynch, whom I have known for most of my life, is a native of Martin County, North Carolina, from the town of Oak City, which is right in the heart of my congressional district. The Lynch family has deep roots in eastern North Carolina.

Ms. Lynch has a 30-year career, distinguished legal career. She is a well-

respected lawyer and Federal prosecutor in the Eastern District of New York, which serves 8 million people throughout Brooklyn, Queens, Staten Island, and Long Island. Loretta Lynch is consistently recognized among her peers as a tough, fair and independent lawyer who has twice headed one of the most active and effective U.S. Attorney's Offices in the country.

Ms. Lynch has a proven record of prosecuting hate crimes and cracking down on public corruption without regard to political party or affiliation. She has a reputation for being committed to protecting human rights and ensuring equal opportunity for all Americans. Ms. Lynch possesses high moral character and integrity. She has the perfect set of professional credentials to lead the U.S. Department of Justice.

She remains steadfast and unflappable when facing the court of public opinion and upholds the letter of the law in all circumstances, even when it is unpopular.

Throughout Ms. Lynch's confirmation process, Senators in both parties have lauded her qualifications and her sterling career. However, Ms. Lynch has waited longer for a confirmation vote than any U.S. Attorney General in modern history. Her nomination has been pending for more than 100 days. The politics that Republicans have played with Ms. Lynch's nomination are deplorable, and opposition to her nomination is nothing more than, in my opinion, a political ploy to once again use any means necessary to show their disdain for the President.

I am deeply disappointed, as I am sure many other North Carolinians are, at Senator THOM TILLIS' vote last week in the Senate Judiciary Committee against the nomination of one of North Carolina's own. Senator TILLIS had an opportunity to be on the right side of history in supporting her nomination, but he did not.

If confirmed, Ms. Lynch would make history as the first African American woman to serve in the role as United States Attorney General. She is an outstanding nominee and an excellent choice. The Senate should move swiftly to confirm Loretta Lynch as Attorney General for the United States of America.

Ms. KELLY of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate Congressman BUTTERFIELD's remarks.

It is now my pleasure to yield to the gentlewoman from Ohio (Ms. FUDGE), past chairperson of the Congressional Black Caucus and Congressperson extraordinaire.

Ms. FUDGE. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my good friend for yielding. I want to thank my colleagues, PAYNE and KELLY, for leading the Congressional Black Caucus Special Order hour. You are our message team. You are the people who let all of the world, all of America know what the CBC is dealing with on a daily basis, and I thank you for your work.

Last week, Loretta Lynch's nomination to serve as the next U.S. Attorney General was finally passed out of the Senate Judiciary Committee by a vote of 12-8. I use the word "finally" because there has been a significant delay with her confirmation. Why her confirmation has taken so long confounds me. I mean, what exactly is the Senate majority waiting for? What is the delay?

The fact that it took over 100 days to just get her to a committee vote is particularly troubling when one considers how long it took to actually confirm former Attorneys General: Janet Reno, 29 days; John Ashcroft, 42 days; Michael Mukasey, 53 days; and Alberto Gonzales, who had to resign as Attorney General, 86 days.

Clearly, Attorney Lynch's confirmation has been singled out for delay. Ash Carter's confirmation moved expeditiously, and he is now the Secretary of Defense. His hearing took place on February 4. He was voted out of committee on February 11, and ultimately confirmed on the Senate floor on February 12.

When testifying before the Senate Judiciary Committee, Attorney Lynch showed grace under pressure while enduring long hours of vigorous questioning. Later, she provided answers to hundreds of questions, all on the record, resulting in more than 200 pages of testimony. Her professionalism and responsiveness are well documented.

Further, Senators in both parties have lauded Attorney Lynch's qualifications. Her record speaks for itself. Senator HATCH, one of the three Republicans—shamefully, three Republicans—who recently voted in favor of Attorney Lynch's nomination in committee, stated:

I have concluded that Ms. Lynch's full record, including but hardly limited to her hearing testimony, shows that she is qualified to serve as Attorney General.

That is all that they are trying to show to the American public. All they need to say is that she is qualified. If they had the President and the White House, they would pick who they want. But they don't have the President and the White House, so they have to deal with who he picks. And she is qualified.

Further, Senators in both parties understand how important it is to fill the position of Attorney General. Yet she continues to be penalized by many members of the majority party for President Obama's immigration policies and a general disdain for Attorney General Holder. Here we are stopping the Attorney General nomination because of immigration, we won't fund the Department of Homeland Security because of immigration—there is a problem in the Congress of the United States. In fact, she is being judged for the actions of others, and we know that. This is nothing more than political gamesmanship.

I call on my colleagues in the other Chamber to stop the charade and get

on with the confirmation. I urge the Senate to put Attorney Lynch's nomination on the floor immediately. Judge Attorney Lynch on her record and her merit, and do it now.

Ms. KELLY of Illinois. I thank Congresswoman FUDGE for her very, very pertinent remarks.

It is now my honor to yield to the freshman gentlewoman from the Virgin Islands (Ms. PLASKETT).

Ms. PLASKETT. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman for the opportunity to speak. I want to thank Ms. KELLY from the great State of Illinois, as well as Mr. PAYNE from the great State of New Jersey for yielding me this time. I want to extend my support for the confirmation of Ms. Loretta Lynch for the position of Attorney General.

As a New Yorker, indeed a Brooklynite, a former Bronx district attorney, as well as having worked at the Justice Department, I have the utmost respect for Ms. Lynch, who has served the people of New York, and indeed this great country, is eminently qualified to be the Attorney General and should be confirmed.

TERRITORIAL VOTING RIGHTS

Ms. PLASKETT. I additionally, Mr. Speaker, would like to discuss another issue that is of grave importance to the people of the territories, and that is territorial voting rights.

As we commend the 50th anniversary of the March on Selma this week, and the subsequent passage of the Voting Rights Act, I want to once again call to the attention of my colleagues here in Congress that there are still American citizens today who do not have equal voting rights. While we may discuss the irrational and truly illogical mechanism which has excluded those who have been convicted of felonies from society for voting, I want to discuss another group which has been disenfranchised, that is some 4 million people to be exact. These are citizens of America's island territories—the U.S. Virgin Islands, Puerto Rico, Guam, and the Northern Marianas—American citizens who willingly risk life and limb in defense of a great nation for which they do not have a vote. American citizens who, in their great patriotism, have paid the ultimate sacrifice, the sacrifice of their lives, and in this last conflict in Iraq and Iran, have died at a rate of seven times the national average.

Citizens of the current U.S. territories have bravely fought in every American conflict, indeed, including the American Revolution, when we gave our own person in Alexander Hamilton from the Virgin Islands to fight in that war. Some have even been awarded the Medal of Honor, which is the Nation's highest military honor. Yet, these citizens who have contributed and sacrificed so much still cannot vote for their Commander in Chief.

This inability to vote has a direct correlation to the poverty and disenfranchisement in so many areas that

the people of these island territories experience. Poverty in the 21st century is a shameful reality in our great Nation, and for decades it has been a serious and persistent problem in the Virgin Islands. Child poverty for us in the territories is a heartbreaking reality.

A recent report from the Community Foundation of the Virgin Islands and Kids Count says 31 percent of the children in the Virgin Islands are living in poverty. To further underscore this troubling statistic, Virgin Islands families are struggling with a very high cost-of-living, driven by the fact that much of our food supplies must be imported, along with the very high cost of electricity. We pay some of the highest prices in the Nation. And while, thankfully, the American economy is on the rebound and reports of job growth are very good news, unemployment on the islands on which I live is 15 percent or more.

□ 1930

The benign neglect of this great Nation to the territories has got to end. Each island was bought for military purposes, and now that it is believed by the country that the physical geopolitical need is not there, the people have been forgotten. Indeed, some have even questioned whether the people were ever remembered on these islands, that the lands and the resources were what this Nation wanted, not the people. But we have contributed much, and we deserve better. Not tying citizenship and the right to vote to the soil—the sovereign soil—on which an individual is born controverts the most basic English and, thus, American law.

Mr. Speaker, Virgin Islanders, who are proud people dedicated to their families, committed to their faith, and are so very willing to work hard for a better and brighter future for themselves, their children, and, indeed, this country, deserve the right to vote.

Ms. KELLY of Illinois. Thank you, Congresswoman PLASKETT, for educating our public on the challenges people on the Islands face. Your words are so pertinent as we go to Selma to remember the events of 50 years ago.

Mr. Speaker, it is now my distinct honor to call to the podium the gentleman from New York, Congressman HAKEEM JEFFRIES.

Mr. JEFFRIES. I thank the distinguished gentlewoman from Illinois for yielding, and of course I want to thank Congresswoman KELLY and Congressman PAYNE for their wonderful leadership in creating this opportunity for members of the Congressional Black Caucus to speak directly to the American people on an issue of great significance, the justice system generally, but specifically, the urgent need to confirm Loretta Lynch as our next Attorney General.

Let me say parenthetically that it feels good to be in the presence of my two classmates, R. KELLY and D. PAYNE. I feel like I am in the midst of celebrity. Certainly, they have done a

tremendous job in calling us all together.

We have got a serious issue that we need this Capitol to confront. In the midst of terrorists who are all across the world who want to strike at our homeland, not only are we dealing with a dynamic where some in the House of Representatives refuse to fully fund the Department of Homeland Security because of an unnecessary obsession with the President's executive action on immigration—let me note, of course, though individuals may differ on its legality, every President since Dwight Eisenhower has taken executive action on immigration. It has occurred 39 times since the 1950s.

President Eisenhower did it; President Nixon did it. President Ford did it; President Reagan did it; President George Herbert Walker Bush did it; and President George W. Bush did it. Every President since Eisenhower has taken executive action to provide some form of immigration relief. But, of course, when President Obama steps forward to deal with our Nation's current problems, a constitutional crisis has been provoked.

What also seems to be interesting, Mr. Speaker, is that the effort to address the issues that some may have with President Obama's executive action has crossed over into trying to stop, delay, and obstruct Loretta Lynch from becoming our Nation's next Attorney General. Some over on the Senate side have even said as such: Well, we are concerned that she has got a supportive attitude as it relates to President Obama's executive action.

Well, many of my good friends on the other side of the aisle are so-called strict constructionists. They believe in the sanctity of original intent as it relates to the Constitution. Well, the Constitution had an article I legislative branch, an article II executive branch, and an article III judicial branch. And the Founders suggested that if there are issues that need to be worked out, it is the court's job to do it. So there is a lawsuit right now pending in Texas challenging the legality and the constitutionality of the President's executive action on immigration. Let the courts do their job. Stop holding hostage our Nation's safety and security, and stop holding hostage the confirmation of Loretta Lynch.

If you take a look at her resume, no reasonable person could argue that she is not exquisitely qualified. Her resume reads like the American Dream: a Southern girl born in North Carolina, raised by a school librarian mother and a Baptist preacher father. She excelled in her elementary and high school studies so much so that she went off to college at Harvard University and then got a law degree from that same institution, one of the best law schools in the world.

She then joined a high-powered litigation law firm in New York, excelled there, but then after several years

took, I believe, what was a 75 percent cut in salary and left the private sector so she could go work as a Federal prosecutor and do some good. In that office, she quickly rose through the ranks, tried high-profile cases in the rough and tumble of New York City with grace and with dignity, always making sure that she was guided by the law and the facts—not politics, drama, and hyperbole.

Loretta Lynch was confirmed twice, I believe, by the United States Senate unanimously. The American people recognize that this is a Congress that can't agree on basic things, yet unanimously Loretta Lynch has been confirmed twice as the lead prosecutor in the Eastern District of New York.

By the way, she is a proud Brooklyn resident now, and I had the honor and privilege of representing Ms. Lynch when I was in the State legislature. She has excelled as the consummate law enforcement professional. She is fair, she is equitable, she is tough, and she is just.

So we are here today simply to say it is time to confirm her. The President has made the observation: You can't stand Eric Holder. The easiest way to get rid of him is to confirm Loretta Lynch.

What is the hold up? Allow her to take the helm over these final 20 or so months so that we have some stability at the all-important Department of Justice. We need all hands on deck right now as it relates to the war on terror. We need the FBI, the CIA, the NSA, and the Department of Homeland Security. We have got to be correct 100 percent of the time. Terrorists only have to be right once. It seems to me that if you have a confirmation pending of a clearly qualified individual to head the Department of Justice, the responsible thing to do is to act, and to act now.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to thank my good friends R. KELLY and D. PAYNE for giving me this opportunity to spend a few moments on behalf of a tremendous Brooklynite, by way of North Carolina, who is clearly qualified to be our Nation's next Attorney General. It is time to bring the confirmation to the floor and to allow her to serve the American people.

Ms. KELLY of Illinois. Thank you kindly to the gentleman from New York, Congressman HAKEEM JEFFRIES, a man of much wisdom and truth.

Congressman PAYNE, we have heard from a number of Members why Loretta Lynch would be a great Attorney General. Hopefully, we can move on this and she will be confirmed very soon.

Mr. Speaker, at this time, I would like to introduce one of my freshman colleagues, the woman from the great State of Ohio, Congresswoman extraordinaire JOYCE BEATTY.

Mrs. BEATTY. Mr. Speaker, I thank my classmate and colleagues for hosting us this evening for the Congressional Black Caucus Special Order hour.

Mr. Speaker, during the past month, we honored the great achievements and rich history of African Americans and the African American community. We reflected on an unfortunate journey through slavery and segregation, prejudices and discrimination. Though we bring Black History Month to a close, the Congressional Black Caucus will continue to fight for justice. Tonight our Special Order hour is Bridging the Divide: Observations on Race and Justice in America.

Our attention to the divides in our society, however, does not end because we entered a new month. We must remain focused on how we can bridge the divides in our society and how we can bring our Nation closer together. The divides are striking, and we know them all too well: the school-to-prison pipeline, education disparities, health disparities, the injustices in our justice system.

It is well established in fact that students of color face harsher punishments in schools than their White peers, leading to a higher number of youth of color in detention, suspension, and, yes, expelled. Mr. Speaker, African American students are arrested far more often than their White classmates. Black and Hispanic students represent more than 70 percent of those involved in school-related arrests or referrals to law enforcement. Currently, African Americans make up two-fifths and Hispanics one-fifth of confined youth today.

Disparities are found not only in how we punish behavior in schools, but also how we fund education. Mr. Speaker, this is true in K-12. It is also true in higher education. And we know that a college degree is a path to a middle class life. As African American students graduate with more debt than their White classmates, the cuts to Pell grants are threatening African American access to a better education. Without the Pell grant program, hundreds of thousands of young African Americans would not be able to afford college.

The disparities in access to health coverage are startling. The infant mortality rate among African Americans is 2.3 times that of non-Hispanic Whites, and African American infants are four times more likely than non-Hispanic White infants to die, mostly due to complications related to birth weight.

Mr. Speaker, we must confront these prejudices and these injustices in our Nation head-on. The Congressional Black Caucus is committed to resolving these challenges. The Congressional Black Caucus has fought to ensure funding the Pell grant. Pell grants are contained in each year's appropriations bills. We have worked hard to make sure that the maternity and newborn care are part of health care plans under the Affordable Care Act. Over 390,000 African American women in the individual market alone are projected to gain maternity coverage thanks—yes, thanks—to the Affordable Care

Act. Our task force on the elimination of sentencing disparities is moving the ball on how Black men and women are treated in the judicial system.

As we have been working here in Congress, our partners, the Deltas, my sorority, Delta Sigma Theta sorority, held their annual Delta Days in the Nation's Capital today with thousands of women from across this Nation gathering and advocating for these same disparities and injustices.

As Deltas were uniting in their efforts today in our Nation's Capital, my sorors and I were also uniting for one of our very own—nominee Loretta Lynch. Last week, the Senate Judiciary Committee voted 12-8 to approve the confirmation of Loretta Lynch as the next United States Attorney General, bringing her confirmation to the full Senate for consideration.

I remember it all too well a couple weeks before that when we were in that hearing room. It looked like a sea of red as Deltas marched in and lined up one after another wearing our colors, crimson and cream. Deltas lined the outside of the hearing room. Mr. Speaker, we did that because, prior to entering that room, media and some of my colleagues on the other side had tried to make it a bad thing that she organized and was a founder of her college chapter of Delta Sigma Theta sorority.

□ 1945

What we were able to do was to show them when we work together, whether that is Democrats and Republicans or sorority members or nonsorority members, when it is the right thing to do, we can make a difference.

I was so proud last week to sit there on the front row with my other colleagues—with our chairman of the Congressional Black Caucus, Congressman G.K. BUTTERFIELD; with the 100th woman sworn into the United States Congress, Congresswoman ALMA ADAMS; to be there with the 21st national president of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Congresswoman MARCIA FUDGE.

We sat there next to Loretta Lynch's father, Reverend Lorenzo Lynch of North Carolina, while the Judiciary Committee favorably reported the nomination on a vote that was closer than it needed to be.

Ms. Lynch's nomination is well deserved and historic. Ms. Lynch testified before the Senate Judiciary Committee for nearly 8 hours, and she responded to nearly 900 written questions, which is unprecedented. Many of the written questions, Mr. Speaker, were from Senators who had already declared their opposition to her nomination.

Ms. Lynch's nomination has now been pending far longer than any recent Attorney General's nomination which, in my opinion, Mr. Speaker, is shameful. She deserves to be voted our next Attorney General. If Senators have a reason to vote against her nomination, they should make their case

public. Yes, hiding behind procedural tactics does not help our Nation.

As the Senate has an opportunity to unite behind a well-qualified nominee for a critical position, Congress Members will have an opportunity to be united this weekend when Democrats and Republicans will travel to Alabama to march to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Selma marches.

Fifty years ago, people marched for equal voting rights. Out of those marches, we got the Voting Rights Act. However, disparities remain, and the Voting Rights Act has been eroded.

We can end this divide, Mr. Speaker, of who votes if my Republican colleagues would bring up the Voting Rights Amendment Act, H.R. 885. Let me say that again, Mr. Speaker. We can end the divide of who can vote if my Republican colleagues would bring up the Voting Rights Amendment Act, H.R. 885.

How long will it take? How long must we wait to have equal rights and justice? It is well past time that we deliver to all Americans what they deserve.

Like we did 50 years ago in Selma, we must do so again today and stand united arm in arm, as my Congressional Black Caucus colleagues and I did recently in Ferguson and as we will do tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow.

Together, united, we can bring an end to the disparities that hold our hardworking families back from achieving the middle class dreams and the dreams of all Americans: that we should be equal.

Ms. KELLY of Illinois. Thank you to the gentlewoman from the great State of Ohio. You have done a great job describing the challenges and sharing the progress that has been made thus far for our constituents of color. You have given us a call to action.

Mr. Speaker, once confirmed, Loretta Lynch will replace Eric Holder as Attorney General. In that role, she will be in charge of managing and directing the policies of our Nation's law enforcement officers.

Ms. Lynch, as we have heard, is uniquely fitted to serve that role for our Nation, especially at this critical point in our national discourse. As U.S. attorney for the Eastern District of New York, Ms. Lynch currently serves as the chief Federal prosecutor for Brooklyn, Queens, Staten Island, and Long Island.

The death of Eric Garner this past July occurred on Staten Island, within Ms. Lynch's jurisdiction. Eric Garner's death—followed by the death of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri, this past August—stirred a national discussion on use of force by police. Unfortunately, this discussion has produced increased animosity and distrust between law enforcement officers and the communities they serve. This is especially true in communities of color.

This is not the right approach, Mr. Speaker. This is not the way to move

our country forward. We cannot afford distrust between law enforcement and the communities they are tasked with protecting. What we need is increased compassion, increased understanding, and increased trust between police and communities, and Loretta Lynch understands this.

In her opening statement before the Senate Judiciary Committee last month, Ms. Lynch stated:

Few things have pained me more than reported tensions and division between law enforcement and the communities we serve. If confirmed as Attorney General, one of my key priorities will be to work to strengthen the vital relationships of courageous law enforcement personnel in the communities we serve.

My family members have served and do serve in law enforcement. I have many friends in law enforcement. I have been fortunate enough to have many positive experiences with the law enforcement community. I understand just how courageous and brave the men and women who dedicate their lives to keeping us safe truly are.

However, I also understand the fear many citizens in communities of color have toward law enforcement following these tragic events. Nobody should live in fear of the institutions put in place to protect them. To move forward, we must change the conversation from law enforcement versus community to law enforcement and community.

Essential to advancing this cooperative and mutually beneficial relationship is the Office of Community Oriented Policing Services, or COPS office, within the Department of Justice. COPS is tasked with building trust and mutual respect between police and their communities.

Increasing trust is essential to advancing public safety. A citizen who trusts their local police office and understands their mission is less likely to engage in antisocial and unlawful behavior; and a police officer who can empathize with the fears, sensibilities, and concerns of community members will be less likely to take rash, unwarranted, or disproportionate responses to those unlawful actions.

These focused efforts allow for law enforcement agencies and communities to work together and, instead of simply addressing immediate concerns, address systemic issues plaguing communities, many of which serve as the root cause of the violence and crime that occurs.

The COPS program's motto is: "Building Relationships, Solving Problems." For the past 20 years, COPS has done just that. COPS grants have given billions of dollars to State and local law enforcement agencies to hire police officers, provide technical assistance, and conduct training programs teaching collaboration skills, increasing shared understanding, and advancing sensitivity training.

Mr. Speaker, I can think of no better person to lead our Justice Department and further advance the efforts of the

COPS program than Loretta Lynch. Ms. Lynch is exactly right in her desired focus of prioritizing improving relationships between law enforcement and communities. Her vision is exactly what the Justice Department and the COPS program, in particular, need at this critical point in time.

I fully understand the frustration, anger, and deep concern felt in communities across the country; however, it is simply unsustainable to have a dynamic where police fear communities and communities fear the police.

In order to ensure that all State and local law enforcement agencies and the entire justice system treat all Americans fairly and value all American lives equally, we must hold law enforcement to high professional standards and provide them with necessary training to effectively protect and police diverse communities.

Mr. Speaker, this month, we recognize the 50th anniversary of the March on Selma, Alabama. The brave men and women who marched across the Edmund Pettus Bridge that day and the countless others through the Jim Crow South were on the receiving end of horrendous and unspeakable actions of police brutality.

We have come a long way over the 50 years, Mr. Speaker; however, much work remains. I can think of no better person to lead that charge than Loretta Lynch. I look forward to her service as our Nation's Attorney General and the robust COPS program she will advance.

I yield to my great partner from the great State of New Jersey.

Mr. PAYNE. Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the gentlewoman from Illinois for her concise assessment of the nomination of an outstanding prosecutor, outstanding attorney, and outstanding American.

As it was stated by one of my colleagues, Ms. Lynch has followed and been a part of the American Dream, coming from meager beginnings, having a mother and father who cared for her and nurtured her, allowed her to get a good education and move on to—as it was stated—one of the best schools in our Nation and in the world and also to get her law degree from that same school.

Now, it appears to me, based on the hearings that I saw, Ms. Lynch has one problem. Is it her qualifications? No. Is it her demeanor? No. Has she done everything that she has been asked to do as a prosecutor in the Eastern District of New York? Yes.

Well, why is she not qualified? Well, no one is saying that she is not qualified. There is a political issue in the way, and that political issue is that she is the nominee of President Barack Obama, and that is her only issue, as I see it.

She has done everything that a good American should do: played by the rules all her life, pulled herself up by her bootstraps, got a good education, went into the private sector and then

decided, Do you know what, I am going to go be a Federal prosecutor at a 75 percent decrease in salary.

Now, if that is not an American committed to this Nation, I don't know what is, so her only violation is that she was nominated by this President. Immigration continues to be the issue that is the rub. That is why we don't have funding for the Department of Homeland Security: because of immigration, because my colleagues on the other side don't agree with what the President did.

This is outrageous, this is absolutely outrageous, that a person that has done everything that they are supposed to do gets to this point and was confirmed twice by the Senate—now, I don't know if President Obama nominated her either one of those times, but now that he is nominating her for this position, well, she just doesn't cut it, there are issues.

They are not her issues. They are issues with my colleagues on the other side of the aisle and their disdain for their President at times, absolute disdain. It is a matter of you are better off not saying that you are involved with the President the way it is going around here. It makes no sense. It absolutely makes no sense.

Now, here is a woman that has allowed herself to go through this process and knew it was going to be rigorous, knew there were going to be challenges, knew she would be challenged, and came through the committee 12-8. But people initially that were going to support her, Mr. Speaker, had decided, Well, now, there is something wrong.

I mean, what happened? What happened in 2 weeks, in the space of 3 weeks, that has made you anti-Loretta Lynch?

□ 2000

We have issues all over this Nation, Mr. Speaker, that we need to be dealing with, and the Department of Homeland Security is one of them. We need to fund the Department of Homeland Security. It is interesting. I hear my colleagues' interest and concern about immigration and people coming across the border.

If you don't fund the Department of Homeland Security, how do you think that work continues? If you think it is bad now, don't fund the Department. You have people listening—the terrorists. You don't think terrorists are listening to this? You don't think this is a great opportunity for them to decide to maybe go rogue, to come out of their lone wolf status and do what they need to do because they know no one is minding the store because we decided to furlough people? You are concerned about this Nation and its security? It doesn't make sense to me.

We have many issues in the African American community, and we are here every other Monday night to express them—criminal justice, the issue around “Black lives matter,” and the

perceptions of police treatment in the African American community. I can tell you a personal story about my interaction, as a youngster, with a member of the police force back in my home in Newark, New Jersey.

It was a horrendous, horrendous episode in my life, but I got a break because the officer realized that my father was a member of the city council of that town. Prior to seeing my name on my driver's license and learning that, he told me that, if I didn't produce the papers that he wanted, they would throw me so far under the jail that they would never find me. But once I produced this document that said that I was all of a sudden somebody—I am a person; I am relevant—then he became nurturing. He said: Don't you know that making a U-turn is dangerous? and became paternal, but prior to that, it was that they would throw me so far under the jail that they would never find me.

So I stand here, Mr. Speaker, on behalf of all of the people who wouldn't have gotten that break. It is my obligation to make sure that the playing field is level, not because you are related to someone, not because you know someone, not because you have connections. Every American should be afforded the opportunity I was afforded that day.

In closing, I would just like to thank the gentlewoman, ROBIN KELLY, for her leadership in leading tonight's Congressional Black Caucus hour. These Special Orders give us the opportunity to speak directly to the American people about the work on their behalf and the issues that we care about. This is something that we do, and we are honored to be able to do it.

I would also like to thank the people at home who have tuned in tonight. It is our point to engage in an ongoing and meaningful dialogue, and I hope that they will continue to join us on Monday nights.

We began by discussing the nomination of Loretta Lynch as the next U.S. Attorney General. Ms. Lynch's nomination has been slow-walked by the Republicans, who would rather make it more about the President's immigration policy than about Ms. Lynch's qualifications and strength of character. Ms. Lynch has earned a number of outside endorsements, including from the International Association of Chiefs of Police, and her record is impeccable. It is the hope of this caucus that the full Senate comes to realize the urgency of her nomination and confirms her immediately.

Ms. Lynch's professional record suggests that she will embrace the vision of the Department of Justice, whose mission is to advance the cause of justice and equality for all Americans.

This is absolutely critical to the African American community, whose needs are not currently being met by our criminal justice system. Today, we see a criminal justice system that does not treat all Black lives as though they

matter. From Staten Island to Ferguson, unarmed Black men have been the victims of excessive, deadly force by law enforcement. This creates and perpetuates a distrust in our communities, and it makes it increasingly difficult to have a meaningful dialogue between law enforcement and the communities they are charged with protecting.

These negative perceptions of police treatment are compounded by a number of other factors, including the disturbing gaps in incarceration rates. African Americans are incarcerated at a rate that is seven times higher than that of our White counterparts. These individuals are removed from the workforce often for drug-related crimes during their prime working years. They struggle to reenter society, having difficulty finding jobs and becoming productive members of their communities. Instead of immediately incarcerating those who commit drug-related, nonviolent crimes, more effort should be devoted to rehabilitation.

At the same time, we need to reevaluate the effectiveness of the war on drugs, a war that disproportionately affects African Americans and devastates African American and minority communities. When ex-felons reenter society, we need to ensure that our criminal justice system avoids purely punitive measures against them, including ex-felon disenfranchisement.

Finally, there is the reforming of our criminal justice system so as to eliminate disparities in sentences. According to the National Urban League, mandatory minimums and disparities in crack cocaine sentencing incarcerated countless numbers of African Americans for an inhumane length of time and had the U.S. as the world leader in prison population. This has created a modern-day caste system in America. When we address these issues, we will make significant progress toward a criminal justice system that reflects our values of full equality for all Americans.

Ms. KELLY of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise today along with my colleagues, Congressman DONALD PAYNE, JR. and Congresswoman ROBIN KELLY, in support of the CBC Special Order Hour entitled: “Bridging The Divide: Observations on Race and Justice in America.” And as I reflect on some of the issues affecting the intersection of race and justice that still plague this country, I am deeply saddened.

Just on the other side of the Capitol, the Republican-led Senate has delayed the confirmation of Loretta Lynch as our next Attorney General, forcing her to wait for a vote longer than any other attorney general nominee in the last three decades. Despite this long delay, the Senate was able to quickly confirm the nomination of our new Defense Secretary Ashton Carter. Critics in the Senate have called into question Ms. Lynch's qualifications, dismissing her as “just another Eric Holder,” choosing to ignore her exceptional academic record and impressive career accomplishments.

In the past few months, this nation has been rocked by the deaths of black men at the hands of police, and the fiery nationwide protests in response. The lost lives of Tamir Rice, Eric Garner, Mike Brown, and so many others have only contributed to the painful perception that black life is devalued in America. Many pundits have observed these tragedies and the various responses to them as proof that race relations in this country have regressed.

There are currently more black men behind bars in 2015 than there were enslaved in 1850, and these sentencing disparities have far reaching consequences. Among democratic nations, the United States enforces some of the world's most restrictive disenfranchisement laws for felons, keeping millions of men and women from ever being able to fulfill their civic duty. We ask them to pay their debt to society, we require them to re-enter society as productive adults, yet we strip them of such a basic democratic freedom. Without question, these laws disproportionately affect African Americans, and Mr. Speaker, it is time for a change.

While the picture I have briefly painted may seem bleak, I remain encouraged by the resolve of so many Americans around the country. Nationwide protests by people of all backgrounds have forced local lawmakers to confront their policies and make sure that they reflect the communities they govern. But as we all know, there is a long road ahead. And as the conscious of the Congress, it is the responsibility of the Congressional Black Caucus, to ensure that this august chamber addresses these issues essential to the quality of life for all Americans.

WILL THE U.S. AND THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY ALLOW IRAN TO DEVELOP A NUCLEAR WEAPON?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 2015, the gentleman from Utah (Mr. STEWART) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. STEWART. Mr. Speaker, I am honored tonight to lead this Special Order on what is one of the most critical issues facing our Nation in generations. Now, I know that sounds dramatic and that it sounds like it is a statement that is just designed to capture people's attention, but it is actually true. This is a question that will define our safety and our security for generations to come.

The question we face and the issue that we want to address tonight is: Will the U.S. and the international community allow Iran to develop a nuclear weapon?

For generations, it has been the policy of Republican and Democratic administrations that we would not allow that to happen. It is critical to the security of our friends and allies in the region that we are successful in denying them this. It is critical to our own national security, to the interests at home, and to our interests abroad that we not allow Iran to nuclearize their weapons program. So we come to this question: Will we allow that to happen?

Tonight, I stand here, along with many of my colleagues, to express my great concern about what the President is doing and the state of the negotiations as they are now. Tomorrow, we get to hear from the Prime Minister of Israel. I look forward to hearing his comments. He certainly has, as they say, a dog in this fight, but so do we. Let me begin by telling you a little bit about my background.

I spent 14 years as a pilot in the Air Force. I flew the B-1. At one point, I was the pilot rep for the implementation of the Strategic Arms Reduction Talks, or START I and START II, implementing a treaty that we had with the former Soviet Union. This was a very interesting experience. I learned a lot from this. I certainly learned of the details and the necessity of following through with every tiny detail of these treaties and of implementing them. Our Russian counterparts could show up at our base at any time with only a few-hours' notice. They had access to the most highly sensitive areas. They would measure; they would observe; they would talk; they had incredibly sophisticated ways of verifying that we were complying with elements of the START Treaty, as we did with Russia.

These elements, in my opinion, are one of the keys to making sure that this treaty that the President is negotiating is successful, which brings us then to, really, one of our central questions, because I learned from my own experience that, for a treaty as sophisticated as this would have to be to be successful, there has to be a modicum of trust, an element of trust, between the two parties—a grain, a core of trust—where they both want the treaty to succeed. I don't know if we have that now.

I had the opportunity to address this concern with Secretary Kerry just last week. I asked him very simply: Can you name me a single example where the United States or our allies for generations have had a positive, constructive experience with Iran? Can you show me any example of how they have worked with us in a positive manner? He could not provide me with a single example.

Once again, this is one of the central questions that we have to address, so let's ask this question: Can we trust Iran? Let me explain to you why I think the answer to that is "no."

You see this map beside me. This indicates Iran's range of influence around the world, and it reaches, as you see, from North Korea, through central Asia, through the Middle East, through parts of Europe, to South America and to Mexico. Iran has been a state sponsor of terrorism for more than 30 years. They, by themselves, have developed an extensive military complex—the Defense Industries Organization, as they call it. The DIO is able to supply Iran with all of the materials that they need in order to carry out their terrorist activities around the world—all of the ammunition, all of the equipment, all of the weapons.

In fact, Iran is the primary supplier of the weapons and ammunition of two other officially recognized state sponsors of terror—Sudan and Syria. It is the primary sponsor of a number of listed foreign terrorist organizations, including Hezbollah and Hamas and numerous Shi'a militias in Iraq.

Iran has directed the terrorist activities of numerous of these Shi'a militias, and let me point out this fact: over the last dozen years or so, these Iranian-backed militias have been responsible for the deaths of hundreds of American soldiers working in the theater. Hundreds of American soldiers have lost their lives due to the direct activities of Iran.

As I mentioned, and as you can see on the map, they engage in narcotics trafficking and human smuggling in Mexico. In the tri-border area of Brazil and Argentina and Paraguay, Hezbollah has a safe haven for recruiting, training, and fundraising. Even Venezuela is, similarly, a safe haven. In India, they provide support for Syed Kalbe Jawad, who is recruiting Shi'a militias to fight in Iraq and Syria. They cooperate with North Korea in cyber warfare. The list of their interventions in a negative and a destructive way around the world is, indeed, very long.

□ 2015

They are a strategic ally of Russia and China. They provide port facilities. They are a strategic ally of North Korea. They have cooperated with North Korea to develop ballistic missiles.

So, once again, let me come back to my conversation with the Secretary of State, where I ask him: Can you give us a single example of a positive or constructive alliance or agreement or partnership that we have had with this Nation of Iran?

And the answer has, once again, been no.

Iranian leaders have stated their objective is to destroy Israel and, of course, the great Satan, the U.S. In fact, I can show you.

Look at this picture, and you may wonder what it is. It is not something taken from World War II or from another war. This actually happened last week, where Iran completed a successful exercise in a simulated attack on a U.S. aircraft carrier. Does that sound like the activity of a potential partner?

Hezbollah has stockpiled approximately 60,000 surface-to-surface rockets in Lebanon. Hamas has stockpiled approximately 10,000 surface-to-surface rockets in Gaza. Iran is, of course, the primary supplier of both of these, and their stated purpose is to destroy Israel, to wipe it off the map.

As the current Iranian President Rouhani said: "The Zionist regime has been a wound in the body of the Islamic world for years, and the wound should be removed."

The former President said, in 2012, that Iran has no roots in the Middle East and that it would be eliminated.